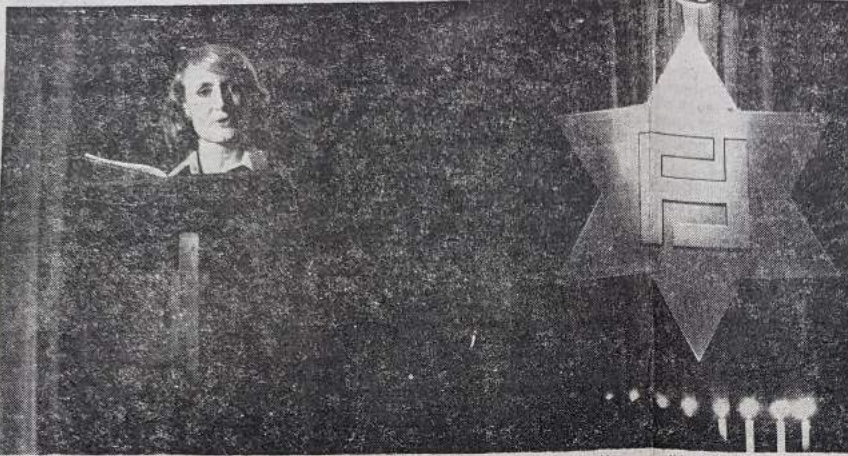


# THE NEW SECTS

## Post Daily Magazine



Mother Rhea, a member of the Council of Luminaries, leads a Sabbath Celebration at the Foundation Church of the Millennium's Shrine on East 38th St.

### ARTICLE III: Farewell to Satan.

By LINDSAY MILLER

ALMOST ANY DAY, in front of Saks or Bloomingdale's or Bergdorf's, you could see them trying to convince people about the importance of loving Satan.

As it turns out, they were also trying to convince themselves. But, for a while, it was all quite puzzling.

They certainly didn't look "satanic," these attractive young people in their smartly-tailored royal blue pants suits. Their manner was always low-key and polite, and they wore silver crosses around their necks.

But if you looked closer, you could see a red serpent coiled upon those crosses.

The cross-and-snake, they said, was a symbol of their dual allegiance to Christ and Satan. They believed that when Christ said, "Love your enemies," he meant for people to love Satan as well.

"And if you'd like to find out more, here's a copy of our magazine—for a donation, please."

These were members of The Process Church of the Final Judgment—a remarkable "new religion" invented by (he would say "revealed to") a bright young Englishman named Robert de Grimston in 1964.

Like the Pilgrims, the Process migrated to America in 1970 because the soil here seemed fertile for new religions. Starting with a core of about 30 young people, they claimed to have established 120 outposts in the U. S. and Canada, with major chapters in five cities and headquarters in New York.

Their chief doctrine was the "Unity of Christ and Satan"—until May 24. On that date, in a surprise announcement, the majority of Process members publicly renounced de Grimston and his teachings about Satan and renamed themselves The Foundation Church of the Millennium.

"We finally admitted that the doctrine of loving Satan never made much sense," said Father Lucius, 36, one of the original members of the Process Church and one of the Council of Masters that voted to oust de Grimston.

"It was like deciding to have a tooth pulled," he said. "It hurt, but if we didn't do it, the whole jaw might rot."

He said the Foundation would focus on a theology much easier to appreciate on the "gut emotional level"—namely, that the world is coming to an end.

"I know, people have been saying, 'The end is nigh' for thousands of years. But now it really seems to be happening, doesn't it?" said Lucius, who looks a little like Mr. Spock on the "Star Trek" television show.

The Foundation expects a Messiah to come, and they are convinced that one group has been chosen to help start the new world in the New Age.

"Guess which one? If you guessed the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Children of God or the followers of the Rev. Sun Myung

Moon (among the groups which make the same claim), guess again.

Dropping all the talk about Satan did make the church's theology easier to understand. But it didn't do anything to answer another puzzling question: Where do these people get their money?

"We sell a lot of literature on the street," Lucius said, possibly explaining the group's preference for carriage-trade locations like the Fifth Av. stores.

"Members with regular incomes also tithe," he added. "And some people have been extraordinarily generous."

The Foundation recently moved to new headquarters at 111 E. 38th St., where they rent three floors. The basement level is a chapel, the upper floor is the office of their magazine, and the ground floor is a coffee house, which looks more like a Beautiful People hangout, with its low lights, plush carpeting and tasteful, piped-in rock music.

The Foundation rents another building on the same Murray Hill block to use as a dormitory for lower echelon ministers, young people who have only recently decided to dedicate their lives to the Foundation.

(The Foundation insists, by the way, that they don't have orgies or any other strange practices. While the Process still had its "satanic" image, they say, a lot of "nasty rumors" got started.)

The higher level ministers live in a rented townhouse on E. 49th St., just around the corner from the Aga Khan's New York *piet a terre*. And the highest level ministers, who are now called the Council of Luminaries, have bought a town house on E. 64th St. from architect Edward Durell Stone.

"We see our primary mission as healing," Lucius was saying. "We try to help the sick, the lost and the lonely, and these people exist at all levels of society, you know."

Loneliness, in fact, may have been what brought a motley group of 18 people to a Foundation "healing service" the other Friday night. They sang lively songs, did yoga deep relaxation exercises and afterwards went to the coffee house, where they all seemed to enjoy themselves.

"This is the one place I know where millionaires, ex-convicts and welfare recipients all get together," said Phoebe D., a woman of around 30 or 35 who said she represented the latter category.

She told a long tale about injustices she said she'd suffered from the Dept. of Social Services. She said the Foundation was the first place she'd gone where people "really helped."

The Foundation, it seems, is doing for her and others what churches and synagogues traditionally have—providing a non-threatening place to go and be with others as well as a place to turn in time of need.

Unlike many of the "new religions" which emphasize personal religious ecstasy, the Foundation stresses getting out and helping others. Founders, as they are called, do volunteer work at places like the DeWitt Nursing Home and Willowbrook State School.

"And they're not fair-weather volunteers," said Robert Flavin, coordinator of volunteers at Willowbrook. "I wish I had a thousand like them."

Apparently the Foundation not only does good for the public, but also does well (in the sense of providing a comfortable living) for its leaders. If so, it certainly wouldn't be the first such religion to do so.

Back before the schism, Father Micah, another of the original British Processseans, had invited this reporter to tea at the town house at 49th St.

Micah, who was born Timothy Wyllie, is tall, extremely thin, handsome in a very British sort of way, with modishly short blond hair. He is art director of the Foundation Magazine, formerly the Process Magazine. And his talk is full of little verbal winks, so it's often hard to tell when he's being serious or just devilishly clever.

Tea was served in the upstairs drawing room, which looks out over the garden that the Foundation shares with Katharine Hepburn and the rest of the neighbors. Micah passed the rolled cookies and explained, "We



Father Micah: 'Healing the lonely.'

never set out to be a church at all. Ten years ago, we were simply a group of people gathered around one very charismatic figure."

That was an intense young architecture student named Robert de Grimston Moor, who eventually became known as Robert de Grimston.

Micah acknowledged that both de Grimston and his wife Mary Ann had dabbled in Scientology for a short while, but he denied the persistent rumor that the Process was a spin-off of L. Ron Hubbard's pseudo-science.

"All of us had been experimenting with different psychologies and religions," Micah said. "It seemed clear to us, even then, that man was on a self-destructive course, and we wanted to find some way out."

"We" included five architects (Micah and Lucius were among them), as well as students and other professionals. "We'd been meeting for over a year as a sort of self-therapy group," Micah recalled "when one night Robert began to reveal strange dreams he'd been having."

From these dreams and many nights of discussion, they developed the concept of "the Gods."

There were really four great "energy sources" in the cosmos, they decided—Christ, the son of Jehovah, and Satan, the son of Lucifer. Everyone, they said, had some of each "God" in them. Thus, Satan was just as much a part of human personality as Christ was.

The only way to resolve the inevitable conflicts between the Gods, they reasoned, was to do what Christ had said and "love your enemies." And since Christ's greatest enemy was Satan, that meant loving Satan too.

"It's an elegant mental construction," said Micah. "But it really does take a quantum leap to get from loving your enemies to loving Satan. Back then, though, we really believed we believed."

In 1966, a group of 30 Process people believed enough to leave careers and England behind and live for a year in a tiny Mexican fishing village, where they continued to develop their elaborate theology.

Such a period of isolation is typical in the development of dissident religious groups, writes Oxford sociologist Bryan Wilson, who included the Process in his 1970 book, "Religious Sects" (McGraw-Hill).

Also typical, he said, is an emphasis on the Messiah and the apocalyptic future. And so is a schism involving a charismatic leader such as de Grimston. Until recently, Processseans had referred to him in hushed tones as "The Teacher" or, collectively with his wife, as "The Omega."

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For the last few years, the Omega had kept a very low profile, communicating with their flock only through murky parables. Most Processseans knew de Grimston only through a Christ-like picture, with shoulder-length hair and eyes gazing into the distance, that adorned most Process publications.

"Just because he looked like Jesus didn't mean he could walk on water" is the way Phoebe put it. Lucius said the schism was amicable and that de Grimston is now "in Louisiana, or maybe Nevada" with a handful of disciples. His wife and brother and "probably 98 per cent of the membership"—he couldn't say how many that was—have joined the Foundation.

The change has meant that the old cross-and-snake insignia has been replaced by a new symbol—a design of two Fs in the outline of a Star of David ("to show our longing for the Messiah").

This isn't the first time the group has changed its image, however. When they first started appearing in New York around 1970, the Process people were rather bat-like and creepy. They wore full-length, pitch-black capes and would come swooping up on passersby.

The Process Magazine, at that time, was full of lush and lurid, very strange Hieronymus Bosch-type drawings of Satan and Jehovah, Christ and Lucifer.

Then came the Manson Incident. In 1971, Ed Sanders wrote a book called "The Family" in which he linked the Process with mass murderer Charles Manson. Although it was eventually admitted there was no evidence to back up Sanders' claims, the rumor of a Manson connection continued to haunt the Process.

People also got them mixed up with the Church of Satan, a religion concocted in California in 1966 by an ex-carnival worker and circus animal trainer named Anton LaVey. LaVey is the author of "The Satanic Bible" (Avon), from which comes this sample quote: "If a man smite you on one cheek, SMASH him on the other!"

During this period of confusion, the Process hired a public relations consultant and began to tone down its bizarre image. "We had done the black capes thing as a joke," Micah said. "It's funny, isn't it, the way people like to be scared?"

But now the Process has become the Foundation, and then say they've put Satan behind them.

TOMORROW: 'Yen' Buddhism.